

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF MEETING

18 OCTOBER 2024



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan, Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs John Kabuye, Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Steve Kay, Mary Ovens, David Taylor

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, Stefan Houghton, Andrew Sherris, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Dennis McCabe – Middlesbrough Council

Councillor Sufi Mubeen – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

46. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Annual meeting of 7 June 2024 be confirmed.

48. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committees on 28 June and 23 August 2024, Executive Committees on 5 August and 20 September 2024 and Executive (Appointment) Committee on 1 & 2 October 2024 be confirmed.

49. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

50. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

50.1 Community Risk Management, People and Resource Plans 2022-26 and Service Plan Priorities 2024/25 Progress Reports as at September 2024.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented progress updates on the delivery of the Authority's plans covering the period 2022 to 2026, and specifically the priorities contained within the Service Plan for 2024/25.

The progress to date against the current Service Plan was summarised at Appendix 1 and highlighted that all areas were either completed or in progress, with the exception of the following two finance actions:

- ESR 90.3 – Achieve an unqualified opinion on the financial statements 2023/24
- ESR 91.3 – Achieve an unqualified opinion on Value for Money 2023/24

The CFO reported that the delays were due to a backlog of work by external auditors Forvis Mazars and a Notice of Delay on Publication had been issued to explain why the statutory deadline of 30 September 2024 had not been achieved.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the progress on the corporate priorities set out in the Authority's Community Risk Management, People and Resource Plans 2022-26 as detailed in the Service Plan 2024/25.

50.2 HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in the FRS

Members considered the Brigade's response to the 15 recommendations contained within the HMICFRS report on Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services.

The report had been commissioned by the Home Secretary in Summer 2023 following the findings in the spotlight report on Culture and Values and involved detailed inspections at ten FRSs focusing on their grievance and discipline policy and procedures, whistleblowing and public complaints files. It also considered data provided by all 44 fire and rescue services in England on their grievance and discipline cases and the final report made 15 recommendations to chief fire officers. This included the need for each service to have access to a professional standards function.

The CFO referred Members to the gap analysis report at Appendix 1 which provided a response to the recommendations and highlighted the following key proposals:

Recommendation 13.1 - by 1 November 2024 FRAs and CFOs should consider varying the approach to hearing appeals so that serious or complex cases are heard by a panel rather than one person.

CFB Proposal - to expand the use of the Fire Authority's Appeals panel to hear more serious / complex appeals.

Recommendation 13.2 - by February 2025, FRAs and CFOs should make sure all service managers and members of fire authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training.

CFB Proposal - to roll out a training programme relating to disciplines and appeals which will be extended to Fire Authority Members.

50.2 HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in the FRS cont.

The CFO gave Members assurance that many of the recommendations had already been addressed in the Authority's Culture and People Plan and any gaps would be added to the Corporate Internal Operating Plan and monitored by the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the 15 recommendations as set out in the HMICFRS Report 'Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services, be noted.
- (ii) That the Standards of Behaviour Gap Analysis Report at Appendix 1 and the Chief Fire Officer's intended actions in relation to addressing any gaps relating to recommendations 1-12, 14 and 15, be noted.
- (iii) That Members approved the actions to address recommendation 13.1 and 13.2, as set out in Section 5 of the report.
- (iv) That Members noted that any gaps will be addressed through actions in the Corporate Internal Operating Plan and monitored quarterly in line with our Improvement Planning arrangements.

50.3 Local Pension Board Annual Report

Members considered this report of the Chair of the Authority's Local Pension Board (LPB) which captured the effectiveness and efficiency of the Boards governance and administrative arrangements in line with the requirements of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

The report, which was considered by the Board at its Annual Meeting on 8 August 2024, outlines membership, terms of reference, finance, notifications of interest, record keeping, breaches of law, risk register, GDPR, FPS bulletins, and policy & guidance documents.

RESOLVED – that the Local Pension Board Annual Report be noted.

50.4 Information Pack

- 50.4.1 Employers Circulars
- 50.4.2 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

51. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION ORDER) 2006

RESOLVED - "That Under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to any individual; information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information and namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority."

52. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committees on 5 August and 20 September 2024 and Executive (Appointment) Committee on 1 & 2 October 2024 be confirmed.

53. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

53.1 Retirement of Karen Winter

Members and Officers placed on record sincere thanks to Mrs Karen Winter who was retiring from her post as ACFO-Strategic Planning and Resources following 43 years dedicated to the fire service. This included 16 years at Cleveland Fire Brigade and 27 with County Durham and Darlington FRS.

The CFO thanked Mrs Winter for the exceptional support and guidance she had shown him since his recent appointment and wished her well for her retirement. Mrs Winter thanked Members for their help and support over the years and said she looked back with great pride at her time with the fire service.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**